

Ion Creanga

The Needle and the Hammer



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An illustration on the left side of the book cover depicts a fisherman in a red hat and red pants standing on a large, dark needle. He is holding a fishing line with several red buoys. The needle is positioned diagonally across the frame, with its tip pointing towards the bottom right. The background of the illustration is a vibrant, wavy pattern of orange, yellow, and red, resembling a sunset or a large flame. The overall style is whimsical and colorful.

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and
the Hammer**

84.8Мол7
К85

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4803010200—244
К ————— (Без объявления)
М756(12)—84

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The Needle: You, old bird, why are you making such a fuss? You are constantly quarrelling with your sister, the Anvil. You are shouting and making such a noise that now I have got a headache. I am working the whole day through and nobody is hearing my voice.

— Oh! Look at him! You, wag! Where did you crop up from?

— It doesn't matter. I just tell you, that you are wrong in what you are doing.

— Oh, dear! It is like you teaching your grandmother how to suck eggs. My boy, you should know that you appeared out of our quarred, and now why are you fastening a quarred upon us?

— Excuse me, please! But if there hadn't been the fire, the bellows, the sprinkler and the Man to make you and give you a



name, you would have stayed in the depth of the earth for good and you would have got very rusty, poor things!

— Mind what you are saying, youngster! Do you hear, sister Anvil, the tiny Needle laughing at us?

— I hear, but I have no mouth to answer; I see, but I must be patient.

— You see, sister, it is like the pot calling the kettle black. My young boy! I should like to know what have you done of greater importance than we have?



— I'll tell you immediately what I've done and what I'm going to do. Without much ado I can tell you that all the clothes for men and women, and many other nice and expensive things are not made without me. Go to the tailor, enter a cottage, enter a palace, and you'll find me everywhere. Girls put me in gilded boxes, thrust me in little silk pillows and they are taking care of me as if I were a grand thing.

— Won't you like to be thrown into a haystack, kid?

— Neither in the haystack nor in a corner of the forge, where you are thrown. Tell me, who except the Smith is taking you in his hands?

— Look here, kid! You are going too far! If you are honoured, as you say, why then are you pricking their fingers?

— Yes, I'm pricking the loafer, because I would like to help him create nice and useful things. And you, why are you beating the iron? Aren't you doing this for the sake of making out of it better and nicer things?

— Oh dear, but you have the gift of the gab.

— Yes, I have. But I am hard-working as well.

— All right. You have been shooting the breeze. Now let me tell you what I've got to. The axe, the hatchet, the hammer, the tongs, the poker and many other instruments and machines made of iron, some of them of a colossal size, others tiny and frail as











you are, could they be created without passing through the hammer and the Anvil? The house, the churches, the ship, the guns, the cannons and other innumerable things, could they exist if I were not? You are telling me about nice clothes; I'll tell you of the house, of the hoe, of the sickle, of the scythe, and of the plough. You are telling me most of all of beautiful objects, and I'll tell you of things that are extremely necessary.

— You make me pommel you again, uncle Hammer. The Man needed clothes, first, because he couldn't go naked and barefooted as geese.



— You are wrong, dear boy. It was food and shelter that the Man needed first and then came the thought of nice clothes, as you said. With your clothes you could die of hunger. I think you've heard people saying: «Nakedness goes round, but famine comes home at once».

— Oh, you are so rusty!

— Rusty I am, but I made you and you should listen to my advice.

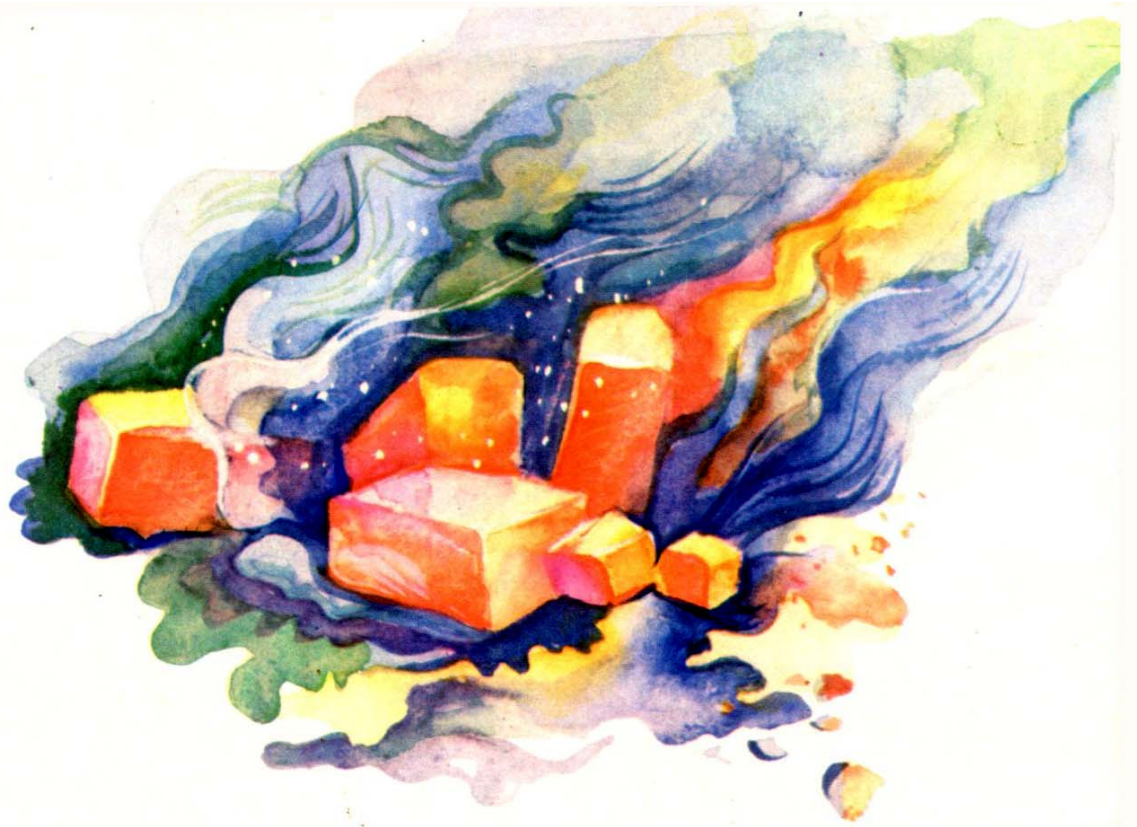


— That's right. But you are boasting too much. You'd better let people praise you. You are making valuable things and so am I. Of course, yours are clumsy and mine are nicer. You are always in the company of that charcoal greased Smith and I am sitting with the Tailor and different other important persons.

— Here you are again, you haughty and talkative youngster! Your Tailor should stitch many times while my Smith is raising me once; your Tailor is sometimes breaking up to ten needles per day; the Smith is possessing me for all his life and he even







can leave me to his children and grandchildren. One more thing: who of these two masters is more stooping and unhealthy? Is it my Smith or your Tailor?

— Uncle! You are older and wiser, you know a lot; let it be as you say.

— Good, my little child! That's another pair of breeches. Say better that we have brought into being the industry and trades, that the greatest riches of the world appeared due to us. You called me rusty and yourself refined. I'm glad that my great-grandchildren will be more refined than me; with time everything will develop and improve. But don't you get haughty

and don't you get haughty and don't forget of your descent, don't get too refined, because some of you may lose the ears or the teeth, the mouth or the dents, and as a result become a jagged instrument good for nothing. Then you'll have to come to us again and my sister Anvil will keep you on its back and I'll hammer your wits back into your brains till you come to your senses.





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(на английском языке)

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ИБ № 2670

Сдано в набор 27.02.84. Подписано к печати 23.07.84

Формат 84×108¹/₁₆. Бумага мелованная.

Гарнитура «Балтика». Печать офсетная.

Усл. печ. л. 1,68. Уч.-изд. л. 2,10. Усл. кр.-отт. 7,56

Тираж 20.000. Заказ 40487. Цена 25 коп.

277004. Издательство «Литература артистическая»

Кишинев, пр. Ленина, 180.

Полиграфкомбинат Государственного комитета Молдавской ССР
по делам издательства, полиграфии и книжной торговли,
г. Кишинев, ул. Берзарина, 35.

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